1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

163 average age of the mother at first conception can be estimated to be about sixteen, the range being reported from thirteen to nineteen. The father is generally about five years older than the mother. Considering the existing families with more than one child, we found that families had from two to six living and one or two deceased children. It must be realized, however, that these are not yet completed families and will produce further children. No difference in fertility could be noticed between women married to white men or Indians.

164 The Kaska are not a healthy people. The most common illnesses noted during the period of field work were tuberculosis, poor teeth, influenza, dysentery, colds, skin diseases, such as impetigo, and red eyes. A few cases of gonorrhea were treated by the army physicians. No undue frequency of accidents was noted. The only serious one during the fall of 1945 in the Upper Liard tribe was the case of an elderly man who fell while accompanied and sprained his back.

Children tend to have particularly bad teeth. Two children, aged three, had lost the two upper middle incisors and several children showed extremely bad tooth decay. Influenza epidemics occur occasionally and in the fall of 1944 a dysentery epidemic spread from the town of Lower Post up and down the Liard River. At Smith River five Nahane Indian children were reported to have lost their lives from this disease and an upper Liard Indian woman and child also died. Sporadic outbreaks of dysentery continued during the

165 the summer of 1945. Eleven deaths occurred in the period from September 1944 through August 1945. This indicates a death rate of at least 55 per 1000, equalling the birth rate. Of these deaths seven were of children, one a newborn baby.

HISTORY

173 According to the Old Man, an Upper Liard informant, the Kaska Indians of that region believe themselves to be descendants from the Tlingit through the Ross River (Pelly) Indians. The progenitors of the present day Liard River Kaska originally moved south to explore the Upper Liard country and remained there. It seems worthwhile to consider this bit of traditional history. Pelly and Ross Rivers mark the headwaters of the great Yukon drainage system and their confluence represents a point which would be relatively easy to reach by moving up the waterways from Bering Sea. From the head of the Pelly River, migrants could continue toward the interior by crossing the Pelly River-Frances Lake divide, thus striking the Liard River drainage system. Once across this barrier the vast stretch of intermontane basin lying between the Rocky Mountains and the Cordillera would lie open. If such a theory of migration into the intermontane basin is to be sustained, the cultures of the tribes extending from the Yukon River would have to show a reasonable

[171] degree of similarity. Although evidence is still lacking for the groups north of Frances Lake (for example, the Pelly River Indians), similarity is found between the Kaska (but excluding the Nelson River tribe), Tahltan, and Carrier. Masks, potlatching, line dancing instead of circle dancing, and dual organizations are some of the traits common to Alaskan and the Athapaskan tribes of west-central British Columbia but lacking among the more easterly Slave and Sekani groups.

The above migration theory would deny the derivation of the diagnostic traits from the Northwest Coast, although the subsequent development of such traits may have been

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

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offered from that culture area. It seems likely that at least the northern portion of the Northwest Coast area (Tlingit and Haida) and the adjacent interior Athapaskan cultures enjoyed a common origin in Alaska and that at some time a culture prototypical to these moved up the Alaskan river systems. From the headwaters of the Yukon we may then postulate two streams of migration, one down the Chilkat, Taku, and other rivers to the Pacific coast and another into the intermontane basin. A third course of migration probably proceeded eastward from central Alaska and may have been the stream that brought the Kutchin and Mackenzie River peoples to the further inland area.[*] Since this early period there have, of course, been many many other movements into and out of the area. Our informant may be referring to one such known movement of Tlingit to the Pelly River when he traces the descent of his people from such an amalgamation.[*]

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Aboriginal culture.[**] Prior to European contact, Kaska society was organized into a number of autonomous, fluid bands consisting essentially of a nuclear family with such additional relatives as were in-law, parents' siblings, and aged grandparents. The band lacked formal organization, leadership being exercised by a mature man, who was also a capable hunter. The remaining members were probably held together as much by guarantees of subsistence as by the emotional ties of kinship. Little organization other than some ties of kinship operated between bands. Such kinship ties gained their emotional reinforcement primarily from frequent interpersonal contact, but had no direct function in binding together the various bands constituting a tribe. Tribal identification was relatively weak and depended primarily on close similarity of dialect. A matrilineal, dichotomous social organization prevailed in the western portion of the Kaska area (including the Frances Lake, Dease River, and Upper Liard River tribes) but was of limited social importance.

In summer a number of bands of one or more adjoining tribes would find around a fish lake that guaranteed a fairly dependable food supply. From this base the men could go out to hunt and the women could set lines of rabbit snares. In the fall these larger units broke up, and small bands or individual families travelled to the surrounding mountains where large numbers of groundhog and gopher were snared, dried, and cached for winter use. Moose were hunted with snares and bows and arrows and the meat preserved for later consumption. With the onset of winter, the families once more congregated at a fish lake and here spent the coldest part of the year. Occasionally young men were sent to the moun-

[*] Such a theory is not incompatible with Sapir's inference from linguistic sources tracing the Tlingit, Haida, and Athapaskan languages to a prototribe dene language (Sapir, The Athabaskan Languages, A Preliminary Report [1915], 177-178). It is interesting to note that Tutt's Tahltan informants reported that the Tlingit formerly "occupied from time immemorial a considerable part of the interior north of the Tahltans, including most of the drainage basin of the Taku, and nearly all the northwestern headwaters of the Yukon, north almost to latitude 62 and east to the Pelly Mountains and the height of land dividing Yukon waters from the Upper Liard." Tutt, On Tahltans (Athabaskans) Work, 1910 (1911), 280. My own theory has been very strongly influenced through discussions with Professor Osgood.

[*] Old John's paternal grandfather was a Tagish (or interior Tlingit) Indian. Production of his own ancestry into tribal history may, therefore, have led to confusion regarding traditional history. His maternal grandmother, however, was an Upper Liard woman.

[**] This material represents a very brief abstract of a larger body of data which is now being prepared for publication.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1963-1965) 1949 ND12 Nahanni ND12

realized that these could not have been made by beavers. To satisfy their curiosity, they [176]
traveled up the creek and found a house. A white man showed them how these chips of [177]
wood had been made with an ax but extensive conversation between the two groups was
impossible. The following year the trader returned with an interpreter from the east and
some people began to bring their furs to the house in exchange for tea, tobacco, and other
European goods. According to Old Man, the Tahltan Indian once tried to kill the trader at
Dease Lake. A shaman, however, seized the killer's wrist and wrenched away his knife. [178]
Although the "doctor" cut his own hand, he saved the newcomer's life.

Old Fox reported having heard that the Kaska people first encountered the white man
at Dease Lake. The trader subsisted entirely on dry meat which the Indians prepared for
him. A white woman is said to have lived with this man. Informants several times mentioned
that in those days the traders asked Indians to pile up their poles alongside a rifle.
When the skins reached the top of the gun, the trader accepted the pile in exchange for the
weapon. According to Old Man, the Indians were extremely shy of the early white men [179]
and talked to them only with their heads down or otherwise covered.

In 1840, two years after the establishment of Dease Lake Post, Robert Campbell, an
explorer for the Hudson's Bay Company, started out from Fort Halkett and reached the site
of Fort Frances at the foot of Frances Lake. Here he built a dwelling which he called
Glenlyon House after his Scotland home. In 1843 he constructed a trading post which was
first named Frances Lake House in honor of the explorer's wife. The name was later changed
to Fort Frances.* The sight of white men with whiskers at Fort Frances is said to have
greatly frightened local Indians who thought that the strangers were wild animals. At the
sound of a rifle the people fled in terror. Also the Indians would at first not eat bread. The
trader, through his interpreter, explained the use of the tobacco pipe to the Indians, stating
that smoke was drawn into the mouth the same way as milk from the mother's nipple. Thus
the Indians learned to smoke, although at first they were repulsed by the strong smell of
tobacco.

There now follows a period when many of these early trading posts were temporarily or
permanently abandoned. Dease Lake was deserted in May 1849.* It did not resume operations
until many years later and was again closed in the summer of 1941. Fort Frances was
abandoned in 1871, following the leaving of the post by the Chilkat (Tlingit) Indians. It
reopened in 1880 but was again abandoned. A new post was finally built at the foot of
Frances Lake by Jack Hildich about 1936. It was soon acquired by the Hudson's Bay
Company under whose management it continues. Fort Halkett was closed in 1869.* Its
timbers and stone fireplace may still be seen a short distance off the Alaska Highway. The
trade was absorbed by Forts Nelson, Liard, and Trout River Post near the mouth of Trout
River on the north bank of the Liard. This latter post is not mentioned by Gerard,* who
states that after the closing of Fort Halkett those Indians who had been provisioned there

* Campbell, Discovery and Explorations of the Pelly (Tolpin) River (1887), Venable, Historic Posts and Trading Posts (1938), 84; Burpee, Campbell of the Yukon (1941).

* Files, Through the Subarctic Forest (1898), 36.

* McCusick, Report on an Exploration to the Tolpin and Macfarlane Rivers (1890), 23. However, Venable gives the year as 1850. Venable, Historic Posts and Trading Posts, (1938), 79.

* Gerard, Souvenirs de voyages aux sources du Saint-Laurent dans l'Athabasca-Mackenzie (n.d.), 100.

482 the meat pack and the back, or sometimes the folded
284 skin of the animal. Meat for carrying was also rolled up and lashed in the skin. No skewers were run through the pieces of meat to keep them in position nor were temporary bags made of skins as among the Nitak and Shuswap. /One of the Salishan Ntakyapamuk or "Thompson River Indians"/

482 Skins however were made into temporary toboggans and meat hauled in them on the snow as among the Interior Salish.

493 Skin Toboggans

As already mentioned skin toboggans are still used to some extent for hauling stuff on the snow and before the advent of the wooden dog sled were extensively used for this purpose. They were made of leg-skins of caribou in the hair, trimmed in even width and sewed together with sinew, the hair /being placed/ all the same way and lengthwise with the toboggan. The bag of /the/ toboggan is closed at the top with a lacing of thong which passes through slits cut in the skin along the border. The tow line passes through two heavy loops of hide at the head, the skin there being drawn together when in use making the toboggan pointed and easier to drag in the snow. Women generally hauled these toboggans (See National Museum specimen No. 44; also description of Emmons p. 53).

Trade

439 According to tradition very long ago there
● 173 was little or no intertribal trading and the Tahltan group relate the following of pre-trading days. People were few and widely scattered and therefore seldom met each other. Long ago the Tlingit of the Coast were never met. They never came up the Stikine very far and the Tahltan never went down far. There was thus no trading with the Tlingit. At last Tlingit commenced to come up the river and finally met the Tahltan. After this they came often and finally came annually. The time when trading with the Tlingit commenced was long ago, but still not so very long ago. The time is
439 quite indefinite. It seems, however, that the Tlingit have traded with the Tahltan for a long time back. No doubt a great impetus was given to this trade by the arrival of trading vessels among the Tlingit in the beginning of last century and the establishment of trading posts by the Russians. In the quest for furs the Tlingit became in this trade middlemen between the